

Rabies Information

Any Person Bitten By A Potentially Rabid Animal Should Contact Their Health Care Provider Immediately. The Health Care Provider Will Notify The Health Department.

General Information

1. Most animal rabies cases occur in wildlife.
2. Cats are the most common domestic animal to be rabies-positive.
3. Raccoon rabies is common in the eastern part of West Virginia.
4. Bats can also become rabid.
5. Wild Animals acting strangely should be avoided.
 - a. Clinical Signs:
 - i. Drooling
 - ii. Unstable gate
 - iii. Inability to drink
 - iv. See <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/symptoms/index.html>

Rabies Transmission

1. Exposure is from the saliva (from a bite) (not from blood) of an infected animal.
2. A scratch, that breaks the skin, from an infected animal is a "Theoretical Risk."
3. Saliva or neural tissue coming into contact with mucous membrane (mouth or nose) could be an exposure.
4. Saliva or neural tissue introduced into a fresh, open wound would be an exposure. Open wound is defined as one that has bled within the past 24 hours.

Rabies Treatment and Prevention in Humans

1. There is no effective treatment once "clinical" signs of rabies appear.
2. Rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) given before onset of symptoms is nearly 100% effective
3. Rabies PEP
 - a. Wound Cleaning
 - b. Rabies Immunoglobulin (RIG)
 - c. Rabies Vaccination
 - d. There is no time limit applied to giving PEP but the sooner the better.

Additional Information

1. Testing is done by submitting the animal head to the State Laboratory. Testing is only done when there is Human exposure and the brain is intact.
2. The Rabies Virus dies with the animal. To reduce risk of exposure leave a killed animal untouched for several hours. The property owner is responsible for disposal of the carcass.
3. Killing an animal that is potentially rabid does not constitute exposure (see Rabies Transmission above). Burial of the animal deep enough so it will remain undisturbed and drenching the area with a strong Clorox (1/4 cup per gallon of water) solution will prevent other wildlife from consuming the animal and being exposed to the rabies virus. Contact with blood is not an exposure to rabies.